

FACTORS INFLUENCING FARMER DECISION TO DIVERSIFY PADDY FIELDS

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As the outcome of some of the socio-economic changes took place in the recent past some production systems became uneconomical and so farmers had to diversify their farms. Crop diversification is taking place in different agro-ecological regions of Sri Lanka in different ways. This paper provides a selective overview and synthesis of socio economic impacts of diversifying paddy lands during the period from Yala, 2004 to Yala 2008 in the system "H" of Mahaweli. Study also focuses on factors influencing farmer decision to diversify paddy lands.

Relevant data were collected from a random sample of 200 including 50 farmers each who cultivate paddy, Soya and maize. Primary data were supplemented with secondary data where appropriate.

Results shows that farmers who own an upland portion in their paddy fields are more tend to diversify their lands than farmers who are having only low lands. Relative lightness of work associated with the cultivation of other crops and relatively low yield loss due to wild animal damages are the factors that have motivated the farmers to adopt crop diversification. It was also observed that farmers have got organized to sell their produce when they diversified their paddy fields and such group actions are highly beneficial and should be encouraged. As crops, other than paddy need frequent application of fertilizers and pesticides, the existence of efficient markets for inputs as well as output is very important to facilitate diversification.

So, it is suggested that market development should be done while providing inputs as well as market information. In addition to that enhancing extension education and training to make farmers aware on modern production technologies are important to promote crop diversification.

Key words: Crop diversification, System "H" of Mahaweli, Production inputs, Market information